



Kirton Academy:

Attendance Guide for Parents and Carers

2024-25

Key objective: Support parents and carers to ensure they are aware of and understand the government's new statutory guidance on attendance from August 2024.

Objective 1	Outline what schools/academies/families are expected and required to do by the government – the legal obligations.
Objective 2	Emphasise why excellent attendance is so important.
Objective 3	Make it clear that maintaining excellent attendance is about working in partnership, in a fully supportive relationship between the academy, family and child.



Lincolnshire Gateway
Academies Trust

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Key aim: Working together with you, as we all want all children to have excellent attendance.

Why is this document important?

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a document called, 'Working together to improve school attendance,' which applies from 19 August 2024. Please find a link below to the full guidance which is statutory for all schools and academies:

[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)
\(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124424/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_guidance_19_August_2024.pdf)

'Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.' (DfE)

What does the law say about school attendance?

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

- It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.
- This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Why does excellent attendance matter so much?

- This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.
- The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.
- At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.
- Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).
- At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4.
- The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).
- For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms, including crime.

Therefore, **poor attendance decreases** the chances of:

Being happy Building knowledge and skills Getting good qualifications
 Making friends Going on to further or higher education Being happy
 Getting the job you want Being happy Earning the money you want

Understanding absence percentages: You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
 90% equates to a day off every two weeks
 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
 80% equates to one whole day off every week
A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

Key aim: Working together with you, as we all want all children to have excellent attendance.

What must we do to ensure we have excellent attendance in our academies?

It is the responsibility of all staff at Kirton Academy to:

- promote the benefits of good attendance;
- make schools a place pupils want to be;
- set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents;
- systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance;
- recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

How will every member of staff at Kirton Academy endeavour to achieve this?

- Build strong relationships with you, as parents and carers, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with you to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Prioritise attendance in strategies for pupils' overall welfare, such as behaviour, bullying, special educational needs (SEN) support and use of pupil premium.
- Make good attendance a central part of our vision, values and ethos.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place, working in partnership with you as parents and carers.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

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What does the DfE state about granting leaves of absence?

'All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration)

(England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad.
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. It must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with, following the procedure outlined in the academy's attendance policy. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE **does not** consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

*It is the policy of our Trust that, in line with the above guidance, leaves of absence **will not** be granted for any holidays requested during term time. It is extremely unlikely that any leave of absence will be granted unless it meets the criteria outlined by the DfE above.*

What does the DfE say about persistent and severe absence?

- Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils.
- In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.
- Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.
- If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment.

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What does the DfE say about when it is appropriate to issue a penalty notice?

The new national framework for issuing penalty notices is designed to help ensure consistency across the country.

Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

- The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (please note, each day has 2 sessions – morning and afternoon).
- A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).
- These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
- The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Example 1:

If a child has unauthorised absence of 5 days in a row (10 sessions, morning and afternoon), this would meet the threshold for a penalty notice to be issued.

Example 2:

If a child has unauthorised absence of 3 days (6 sessions) in one week, and 2 days (4 sessions), three weeks later, this would meet the threshold for a penalty notice.

Example 3:

If a child has unauthorised absence of 4 days (8 sessions) in the last week of term in July and 1 day (2 sessions), in the third week of the new term in September, this would meet the threshold for a penalty notice.

What is a school expected to do when they become aware that the threshold for a penalty notice has been met?

When a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make the following considerations to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case:

Is support appropriate in this case?

- If yes, schools are expected to continue with the existing support without a penalty notice or issue a Notice to Improve if that support is not working or is not being engaged with. A penalty notice can be issued if either has not worked.
- If no, for example a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued subject to the other conditions below.
- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would further support or one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010 such as where a pupil has a disability?
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence in cases of non-payment?

If the answer to those questions is yes, then a penalty notice should be issued. If not, another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

It is the policy of our Trust that, in line with the above guidance, penalty notices will be issued for any unauthorised leaves of absence for any holidays requested during term time or any other requests that are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances.

What changes has the DfE made to penalty notices?

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool.

Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is

met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Example 1:

If two parents meet the threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week rolling period, and it is the **first time** they have done this, a **first penalty notice** would be issued. If they had one child at the school, they would be asked to pay £160 per parent (£320 in total), if paid within 28 days. This would be reduced to £80 per parent (£160 in total), if paid within 21 days.

Example 2:

If one parent meets the threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week rolling period, and it is the **second time** they have done this, within a 3-year rolling period, a **second penalty notice** would be issued. If they had two children at the school, they would be asked to pay £160 per parent, per child (£320 in total), if paid within 28 days.

Example 3:

- If one parent meets the threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week rolling period, and it is the **third time** they have done this, within a 3-year rolling period, alternative action would be taken. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

What are our next steps?

As a Trust, we are committed to working with you to ensure **all** students achieve to the best of their ability, academically, socially and emotionally and excellent attendance is the key foundation for this. Our academies are currently updating their policies to ensure we meet all statutory requirements of the new DfE's guidance, as summarised above. Crucially, as outlined in this document, we will endeavour to:

- Build strong relationships with you, as parents and carers, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with you to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Prioritise attendance in strategies for pupils' overall welfare, such as behaviour, bullying, special educational needs (SEN) support and use of pupil premium.

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